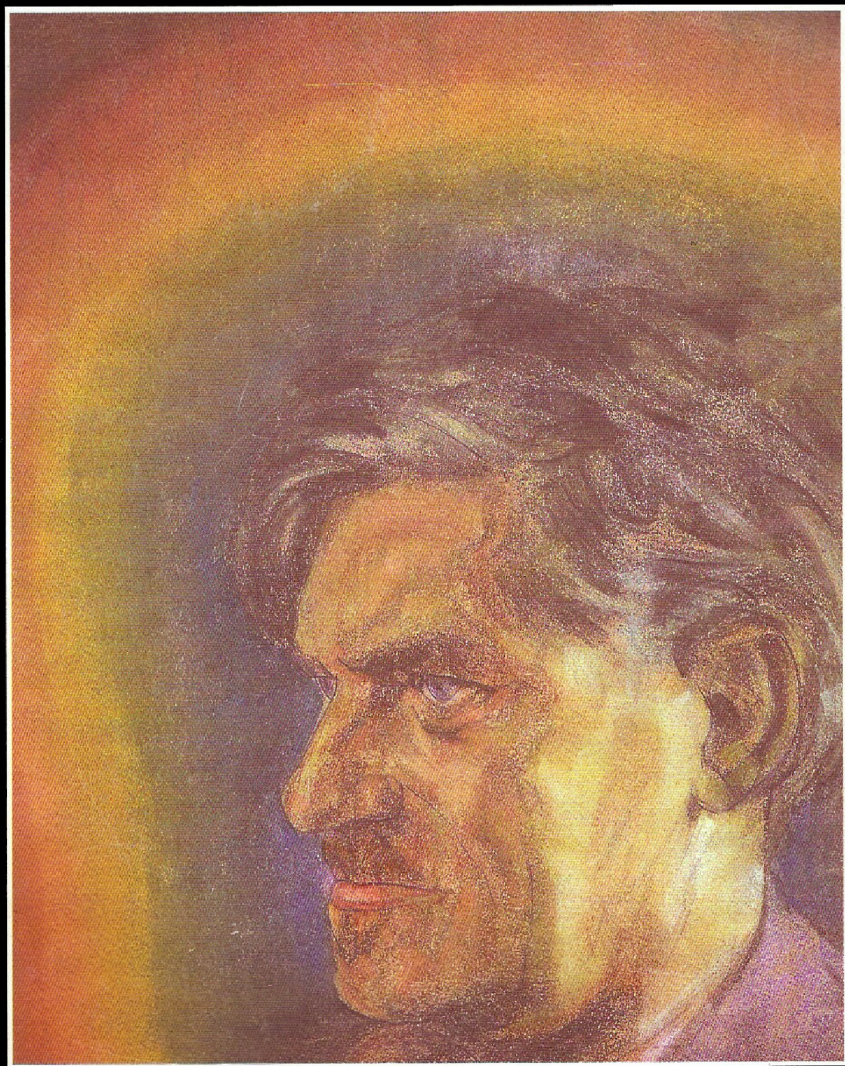




AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE
1886-1956
THE DIVINE DRAUGHTSMAN



INTRODUCTION

by Exhibition Organisers Geraldine Beskin and
John Bonner

CHRONOLOGY

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE

Some outline remarks regarding the life of
Austin Osman Spare by Ian Law

TIME MIRRORS

The Art of Austin Osman Spare
by Genesis P-Orridge

DETAILS OF PLATES

ILLUSTRATED PLATES

EXPLORING SPARE'S MAGIC

by Lionel Snell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CATALOGUE

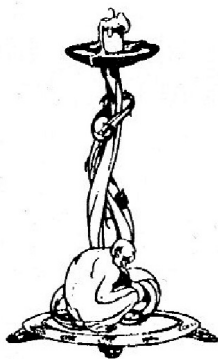
As loose folios

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE
1886-1956
THE DIVINE DRAUGHTSMAN

*An appreciation of the Man,
the Artist and the Magician.*



*Incorporating, as loose folios,
the Catalogue of the Exhibition held at
The Morley Gallery, London, September 1987.*



INTRODUCTION



his exhibition was conceived out of admiration of Austin Osman Spare the Artist and its intention is to help resurrect this neglected genius of the twentieth Century.

The aim is to bring together those who know him as a War Artist with those who admire his portraiture with others who have so far only been aware of his magical work. Each aspect was equally important to him and the breadth of his skill is wasted without a knowledge of all the areas in which he worked.

Spare was a compulsive recorder of life around him and tried to capture the Essence of Life as he saw it. Because of this he seems to have produced very little other than figurative work.

He was a stylistic Chamelion and something of a social one too. He came from a working class background and yet was the darling of Mayfair for several years. He felt secure enough, even among that ravening horde to reject them — and when still pursued, when he wanted to, complied. His attitude to family and friends was always generous.

Magic was the driving force in his life. He encountered it early and forcefully in the form of Mrs. Paterson and it was the facility that it gave him for contact with other worlds that helped him find it easy to reject the trappings of the material world.

The three contributors to this appreciation are all people whose contact with the work of Spare have led them to investigate and study the man and his motives. We are grateful to them for their interesting views so eloquently expressed.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1886 Born December 30th — son of City of London policeman.
- 1901 Apprentice in stained glass factory in South London. Attending Lambeth School of Art and later Royal College of Art in the evenings.
- 1905 Published *Earth Inferno* and exhibited at the Royal Academy. Hailed as a genius by John Singer Sargent.
- 1907 Published *Book of Satyrs*.
- 1911 Married Lily Gertrude Shaw, a Gaiety Girl. Illustrated *The Starlit Mire*.
- 1913 Produced *The Book of Pleasure*.
- 1915 Became Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Worked as Official War Artist.
- 1916 Founded *Form* with Frederick Carter.
- 1919 Founded *Golden Hind* with J C Squire.
- 1921 Published *Focus of Life*.
- 1941 Bombed out from his home, losing work and possessions. Partially paralysed for a time, unable to exhibit as he had done for the previous twenty years.
- 1947 Large exhibition of new work at the Archer Gallery.
- 1956 Died in May having had his last exhibition the previous year. Produced a large body of work in his last few months.



AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE

Austin Osman Spare was born just before midnight on 30th December 1886 near Snow Hill, opposite Holborn Viaduct Station, in what was then King Street. His father was Philip Newton Spare, his mother being Martha Spare *née* Osman. Today King Street no longer exists having long since vanished with the redevelopment of the area. Philip Spare was a City of London policeman. He was in his thirties when Austin was born, the middle child with two elder brothers and two younger sisters.

Although Austin apparently saw little of his father, who spent much of his time on night duty, he, nevertheless, seems to have maintained a harmonious relationship with him throughout his lifetime.

Although Spare seems to have formed a certain dislike of his mother, he did, however, develop a friendship with an elderly fortune teller and hypnotist called Mrs Paterson who claimed to be descended from the Witches of Salem. Quite how this came about is not known but Spare may well have turned to her, his 'second' or 'witch' mother, due to the fact that his own mother had her hands occupied by his younger sisters. What is known is that Spare's friendship with Mrs Paterson began when he was very young. She taught him many of her powers and these teachings were to have a profound effect on the style and content of many of his works, especially when, at the age of ten, Spare began to do automatic drawings.

Certainly, the contents of his drawings could well have been disturbing to Martha Spare and her non-comprehension of them could also have forced the mother and son further apart. She claimed that Austin never cared much for games or for mixing with children outside the family. When he was four years old she is reported as saying "All day long he would have a pencil in his hand drawing anything that was placed before him — his parents, his sisters, his brothers. Nothing seemed to come amiss and we made up our minds that if it was at all possible he should be allowed to follow what was evidently his vocation. Of course it has been expensive to buy his board and paints, and all else that he

requires, for curiously enough he can never be persuaded to sell any of his work. He is even averse to showing it to anyone." Again in May 1904 Martha Spare said that Philip Spare, on his retirement, wished to take a quiet place in the country, but she said they must remain in the town, if Austin was to go on with his studies. "I don't know what to do with him. Sometimes I think I shall take him away from it altogether. It is expensive and we are not rich. But I can hardly do that." (Spare's father had retired a short while previously.) It would seem, therefore, that Spare's dislike of his mother was not wholly justified.

On the other hand, his father appears to have taken a different view, perhaps preferring to let the boy 'get on with it and get it out of his system.' Furthermore, his eldest brother also appears to have encouraged Austin in his teens and to have taken some brotherly pride in his work. Similarly, both his younger sisters were supportive of him in their different ways.

Austin started school in the New Year of 1891. He attended St Sepulchre's Church of England School at the top of Snow Hill, here he learned the three 'Rs', a good deal of moralistic Bible teaching and some rudimentary still life art work. Later he went to St Agnes' at Kennington Park. As he was later to recall, "The first school I went to was St. Sepulchre's Snow Hill. That was merely elementary. Next I went to St Agnes', at Kennington Park, where I first began to draw ... But they really taught me very little there except scripture and it was not until I went to the Lambeth Evening Art School under Mr Macady that I made any progress. There at the age of

fourteen I won a County Council Scholarship for £10 and one of my drawings was selected for inclusion in the British Art Section at the Paris International Exhibition. That took me to South Kensington Art School ...” The religious studies, Spare later claimed, seemed to be basically aimed at inducting a docile, unquestioning, law-abiding attitude amongst his fellow working class citizens. This was one of several facts that helped to further an already deep seated contempt for the trappings of orthodox religion in Spare. Similarly, Spare heartily disliked copying from still life and plaster casts, even at this early age, preferring instead to draw from his own vivid imagination whatever might come bubbling forth. Spare speaking about his work, at the age of sixteen: “Where did I get the ideas from? How should I know? It comes to me by inspiration and I write it down as I receive it.”

Spare left St Agnes’ School at the age of thirteen. However, during the previous year, he had won a National Mathematics Award with a treatise on solid geometry, which illustrates his astonishing all-round abilities and further proved him to be something of a polymath. This award made Austin Osman Spare its youngest recipient and, to date, the only artist to have achieved this particular distinction.

On leaving school, Spare became a Poster Designer for Caustons, a local firm, at a wage of five shillings a week, a not inconsiderable sum for those times given his age and inexperience. Meanwhile, Spare had been enrolled since the age of twelve at the Lambeth Evening School of Art, which contributed to the improvement of his already masterly drawing talents.

After nine months at Caustons, Spare changed direction and went to work for Messrs Powells in Whitefriars Street, this time specialising in tracings for stained glass work. It was whilst he was employed at Powells that Spare got his great chance, which he seized immediately. As he himself later related “...Some glass that I had been designing in my dinner hour came under the notice of Sir William Richardson and Mr Jackson RA and they recommended me for a scholarship at the South Kensington Art School. Ever since, I have been hard at work not only at the school in the

daytime, but here [in his parents’ home in Kensington; this was in 1904] in my room at night, with the result that at sixteen I had won the silver medal in the National Competition and also the £40 scholarship. Some of my drawings are at present in the British Art Section at the St Louis Exhibition and I have some in Paris, where they awarded me a diploma.”

Without doubt 1904 was Spare’s ‘annus mirabilis,’ his ‘wunderjahr,’ for it was then that he became the youngest exhibitor at the Royal Academy up until that time. Again there is conflicting evidence as to how this actually came about. According to some newspaper reports of the time, Spare himself submitted two black and white drawings, both of which were accepted by the Academy, but only one of which was finally hung. Another version was that Philip Spare had come across the two drawings by his son, had been particularly impressed by them and had, without Spare’s prior knowledge, submitted them to the Royal Academy, where they had been duly accepted. Either way, Spare had ‘arrived’ and to crown his success the then President of the Academy, John Singer Sargent, pronounced the young Spare to be a genius.

Spare’s only known formative literary influences in his youth were *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* translated by Edward Fitzgerald and the works of Homer. As he remarked in 1904 to a newspaper reporter, “I am passionately fond of that beautiful poem [the *Rubáiyát*] ... for with the exception of a copy of Homer I got hold of some time ago, it forms almost the whole of my literary education. I have read it sixteen times and I am going through it again at night in bed, marking the passages which are suitable for illustration.” However, February 1904 also saw the publication of Spare’s first book, *Earth Inferno*, a strange allegorical work full of odd and often idiosyncratic symbolism. This was undoubtedly something of a forerunner to the weird sigilism so prevalent in many of his later works. Underlying the book’s *outré* themes and aphorisms was the further evidence of Spare’s lifelong and profound occupation with the occult. Herein, we may justly infer the shadowy Mrs Paterson’s pervasive influence upon him which was to last throughout his lifetime.

Between 1904 and 1909 Spare illustrated



several books by other authors in his own inimitable style and he further published another of his own works, *The Book of Satyrs* (1909).

All manner of doors opened for young Spare at this pivotally important period of his life and he took full advantage of the situation; during the course of which he met a good many celebrities and important people of the day, in the field of art and beyond. With his strong occult propensities he became a frequenter of seances and joined at least two major esoteric groups active at the time.

It was whilst Spare was staying one weekend at the house of the then popular novelist the Rev Robert Hugh Benson that he chanced to encounter his first real ghost. "When I retired for the night I laid awake reading for some time as I suffered badly from insomnia. While lying there on the bed the door opened. I looked round but no one was there, so I got up and closed it. A few minutes later it opened again and I felt something come towards me. It passed right through me and out of the window. I believe that had the candle not been alight I would have seen it, but I did manage to hold a short conversation with it before it disappeared." This had a profound effect upon him, though the encounter was to be only the first of a great many that his developing psychic abilities would help him to discern over the years, such that in time they were almost as real for him as the living.

Writing in 1930, he noted that "I was in the Walworth Road waiting for a tram when suddenly I saw a ghost coming along the pavement. Then came another and another until there was a whole coterie of ghosts walking towards me. They were so vivid that I confused them with passers-by and could not tell one from the other. I soon knew though. The ghosts walked right through me, but the real people didn't!" Spare also had a very similar experience during World War II when he again saw a crowd of spirits walking towards him in the Walworth Road. They were so vivid that again the only way he would tell the difference between them and the passers-by was that the spirits walked through him. Psychically he perceived that they were the victims of

bombing and that they were almost wholly unaware that they were dead.

As late as 1953 Spare wrote in an introduction to one of his exhibitions, "Life is haunted — I see the faces of the so-called dead everywhere, etched and glyphographed on things on roads, while their restless ghosts wander in space; as if Charon demanded payment of the facial imprint, as coined and then scattered roughcast, sown by the wind. They become sigilated, instigated on time and vaguely vanish as their flesh returns. They are 'the awaiting' and would foretell us. Perhaps they are less dead than ourselves . . . the unburied." His many psychic drawings amply illustrate this, suffused as they are with myriad faces and forms, some of demonic aspect, others perceived as in some serene limbo. Spare's often controversial subject matter, no doubt, disturbed many would-be admirers but at the same time he certainly drew baleful elements into his orbit, such as elementals.

The fact that Spare could so skilfully convey in his art supra-mundane realities was in itself an astonishing achievement, especially in one so comparatively young. Many people were obviously much taken with the youthful Spare, who was at this time a tousled haired young Adonis, gifted with a prodigious artistic talent. Yet, despite all the outward trappings of potential worldly success, there were undeniable separatist elements in Spare's nature that set him apart from others. As the world began to open up to him many influences bore down upon him. Spare, despite this, was ever his own man and right from the very beginning was an uncompromising individualist. The need to succeed, though on his own terms, was evidently paramount to his nature. He was never seemingly averse to having patrons, but loathed patronisation from that quarter or from any other. However, according to at least one of his biographers, he was an ardent womaniser whose numerous amours led him into all manner of tricky situations.

Spare's meteoric rise to fame had implications for him in more than one sense. His natural energetic exuberance bubbled out in innumerable works of art, often drawings or an almost Dürer-like fineness of line, and his talent



undoubtedly helped to set him apart in addition to his profound pre-disposition towards solitariness. Whether this eventually cut him off from most of his family is uncertain, although it is known that he was in haphazard contact with some members of his family both immediately before and after World War I. In particular Elizabeth, his youngest sister, who herself espoused a modest talent for drawing. His two elder brothers seem to have dropped out of the picture altogether before World War I; it is believed that they settled in either Canada or Australia, most likely the former. Thus, so far as we can tell, Spare lost contact with them, though this remains to be finally verified.

Spare was twenty-five when he met and briefly courted Lily Gertrude Shaw, a one-time Gaiety Girl. They were married on the 4th September, 1911, in Hanover Square, W1. Lily was evidently something of a spendthrift and quickly exhausted Spare's income at that time and this, coupled with Spare's subsequent philanderings, brought an end to the marriage in a little less than a year. They had been temperamentally unsuited for one another but had been drawn together too hurriedly by Spare because she was a 'tempting morsel' amongst the crowd of young men Spare associated with and it was his pride to make the conquest in the face of opposition.

Notwithstanding these facts they evidently parted on reasonably amicable terms. There had been no children from the marriage. Many years later, during the late nineteen sixties or early seventies, Spare's sister, Elizabeth, claimed that she had met Lily in Ilford High Street. Lily had long ago re-married and there had been several children from the second marriage. After Spare had separated from Lily he lived for the rest of his life, on and off, with a long succession of women, some of whom were his models.

In spite of the above, in November 1911 Spare exhibited at the Baillie gallery in Bruton Street, Mayfair, which, so far as can be ascertained, was his first exhibition in the West End.

Sometime during 1912, probably after his separation from Lily, Spare visited Switzerland under the auspices of a wealthy patron who had commissioned some paintings from him. In the nineteen sixties there was in existence at least one small oil painting, a memento of this visit,

depicting a mountain scene (possibly the Matterhorn). This was then in the private collection of the late Ernest A Chapman of Balham. Spare claimed to dislike working in oils, preferring the media of pencil, crayon and gouache.

The identity of the patron who commissioned Spare to visit Switzerland is not entirely clear, but certain evidence from indirect sources suggests quite strongly that it is likely to have been Aleister Crowley. On balance, it appears that Crowley first sought out Spare rather than the reverse. Knowing the predelections of both men they had considerable interests in common when it came to matters occult. We do know, for example, that Spare joined Crowley's esoteric organisation the AA (Argentum Astrum) on the 10th July, 1910, and that later in 1911 he joined the Ordo Templi Orientis with Crowley under the then overall global headship of Theodor Reuss. The AA was at that time, and remained, essentially a derivative of the original Golden Dawn being basically concerned with ceremonial magic though with a grafting of tantricism. The OTO was and is an international body of initiates intent upon propagating the Law of Thelema.

Spare's membership of the AA was short lived although it would appear that he parted from Crowley on reasonably friendly terms. Crowley respected Spare's strong, unchangeable self-will and Spare, for his part, certainly appreciated much of Crowley's knowledge, if not his actual methods.

It has been suggested very recently by Timothy d'Arch Smith (see his *The Books of the Beast* — 1987) that the reason why Spare abjured the whole cumbersome apparatus of Ceremonial Magic (as did Crowley finally) was for the very practical reason that there was not the room — quite literally — available to carry out the practices. Sheer physical limitations imposed themselves upon Spare; later, when his fortunes declined, that also applied to Crowley. Added to this was the acknowledged individual preferences of both Spare and Crowley for the Tantric paths to Enlightenment. Although Spare and Crowley remained aware of each other's activities, Spare preferred to uncompromisingly follow his own individual path in all matters occult. Crowley had however been able to persuade the young Spare in 1911 to



contribute several drawings for use as illustrations for his part-work *The Equinox*, notable amongst which was *The Death Posture*.

From 1909 until 1913 Spare worked on what is perhaps his single most important book, *The Book of Pleasure*. Kenneth Grant (Spare's Literary Executor), in a number of his own books, has given scholarly expositions concerning the occult significance of this and other works by Spare.

When Spare eventually published *The Book of Pleasure* he was living at a studio in Golders' Green and he was still in residence there when in the July of 1914 he held his first one-man exhibition at the Baillie Gallery, Bruton Street, where he had exhibited, on and off, with others since 1911. The modest but promising response this exhibition evinced was to be almost immediately extinguished by the advent of World War I on 4th August. This did not, however, overshadow a fresh endeavour with the poet W H Davies (1871-1940) with whom he co-edited a sumptuously produced art periodical entitled *Form* but which only managed to produce two issues before Spare was called up for military service during the second half of 1916. One further issue of *Form* appeared in 1917, but by this time Spare was occupied with matters military. The same fate applied to a short lived later publication, *The Golden Hind*, in which Spare had a guiding hand and to which he contributed.

General conscription had commenced in February 1916 and as a young, single, able-bodied man Spare was caught up in the burgeoning military machine of the time. It is interesting to speculate as to why exactly Spare joined the RAMC, being basically a non-combatant regiment. Did this imply that Spare was a covert pacifist? The answer to this question, as with many others, will probably never be satisfactorily known.

Spare's actual movement during his military service in World War I are not at all well known. We have it from himself that he visited Egypt briefly and almost certainly he was on or near the Western Front for some of the War. Nevertheless, the effects of the War were to have a very profound effect upon him both as an artist and as a man.

At the Imperial War Museum in South London there is an astonishing collection of

paintings and drawings by Spare illustrating some of the work of the RAMC field hospitals during the conflict. The works display considerable sensitivity and insight into the human suffering resulting from the harrowing carnage of the war. The composure and absolute dedication of the medical staff is movingly conveyed and there is no attempt at capturing anything other than the starkly poignant portrayal of the dignified suffering and patient endurance of the wounded combatants. This work also shows what a superb draughtsman and artist Spare was, combining this with his compassionate nature for human suffering which he had hitherto not expressed so openly or so magnificently.

Strange to relate, almost everything that has ever been written concerning Spare and his work has, for some completely unknown reason, ignored this particular body of work from World War I. Some writers have mentioned it in passing that Spare had been a War Artist but, so far as is known, none have ever elaborated further upon this fact. No doubt, concerted research might just piece together the story of Spare's War service which could possibly show the background to this signally unique body of work.

As a postscript it should be stated that Spare quarrelled with the authorities at the Imperial War Museum in May 1920 and, henceforth, as far as the evidence shows, had nothing further to do with them as patrons. That was to be Spare's final connection with the Establishment as an official artist.

However, Spare claimed that his brief visit to Egypt during the War had made a deep and lasting impression upon him both as artist and occultist. From this period may be discerned the origins of the Ancient Egyptian influence often prominent in his later work. Having seen and felt profoundly the aura of Egypt around him, its influence was to permeate his works throughout the rest of his life. It perhaps reached its apotheosis in such late works as *Isis Unveiled* and *The Sky Goddess — Nuit*.

Concerning the Egyptians and the nature of prayer, Spare was later in 1932 to make the following statement: "I believe that the Egyptians were great masters of the occult ... and as nothing in the world is lost their powers still exist in the ether. This temple [Spare had



painted an Egyptian temple on wood] is dedicated to the Goddess Nuit and it represents my prayer. Prayer is not going on your knees and asking for something, but is work. This temple was a prayer to save a dying friend, whom the doctors said could not recover. He has recovered and the doctors cannot understand it." In this respect Spare was very much at one with the controversial Russian occultist G I Gurdjieff when he stated that "Prayer is work"

By the end of the War had reached the rank of Staff Sergeant, he could not rise higher or accept a commission because he did not possess a Medical Degree. An odd fact from this period was that Spare was not actually finally demobbed until mid-October 1919, almost a year after the Armistice. What had tied Spare to the military all this time? One can only guess. However, Spare was not confined to barracks during this period and was in fact running a studio in the Fulham Road in the August of 1919; after his demob he occupied another studio in Gilbert Street, just off Museum Street, WCI, from December 1919, for several months.

In 1920 Spare published *The Focus of Life: the mutterings of AOS* with an introduction by Frances Marsden (a pseudonym of Frederick Carter, author of *The Dragon of Alchemists*, a book much admired by D H Lawrence). Then in 1927 Spare published his final extant work, *The Anathema of Zos: the sermon to the Hypocrites* (in an edition of 100 copies) which he had been working on since 1924 and in which one finds, curiously enough, sentiments reminiscent of those in his first book, *Earth Inferno*. In it he mercilessly flays the myopic Art Establishment of his day, as well as its pathetic retinue of sycophants. The tone of some of Spare's rebukes are tellingly akin at times to the lofty pronouncements of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Sometimes it seems in the *Anathema* that Spare's unbridled contempt for the spiritual and artistic acedia he saw all around him (doubtless fuelled by the madness of the World War he had recently survived) induced feelings of almost misanthropic proportions. The book's publication inevitably led to the loss of all but a few remaining friends and it thus became a highly significant watershed in his life. Whether one chooses to interpret it as a trough or a crest in Spare's life it is difficult to judge objectively. It certainly meant that he had crossed the

Rubicon; his life fell naturally, therefore, into two distinct halves, cast asunder by a furious denunciation of the world's evil hypocrisy. Henceforth, Spare turned his back upon success and worldly status, preferring instead to live humbly and to pursue his art and occult investigations according to his own inclinations. From the first Spare had been a proud and immensely independent artist, not readily taken in by all the pomp and panoply of mundane wealth and power.

Spare's latter day life until his death in 1956 falls yet again into two more or less distinct yet similar periods, interspersed by World War II. Both of these sub-periods are characterised by Spare's growing reclusion and the almost total self-absorption with his art and with his occult endeavours. But it must be emphasised that in his everyday dealings with other people, his various models and neighbourhood acquaintances for instance, he was unfailingly helpful, polite and cheery and this despite his often self-chosen down-at-heel existence.

He held exhibitions of his works from time to time in the pubs and taverns of South London. He sold his works for paltry sums of money, claiming that they were not worth more, at least not in his estimation. His portrait subjects included costermongers, barrow boys, layabouts and other urban denizens, few if any of whom realised when they were sitting for him just what manner of artist was at work. It all provided him with a perfect anonymous cover for his real interests and pursuits which lay elsewhere.

At the beginning of World War II Spare had a studio over Woolworth's store at the Elephant and Castle. It was here on 10th May 1940 whilst fire-watching on the roof that Spare (he had been one of the earliest volunteers as an air raid warden) was injured by a German incendiary bomb which exploded, causing him to lose the use of both of his arms, in particular his right arm. He managed to regain the use of his left arm fairly quickly, but it was almost three years before he recovered the full use of both his arms; this was sometime in mid 1943. It has been claimed by some who knew him at this time that, once having gained the use of his left arm, he started producing artwork that was hard to distinguish from that which he had



previously produced with his right hand!

Having been bombed out of a number of cellar studios during the War, Spare was, like many others, at a particularly low ebb by the mid-nineteen forties. Such was his poverty and deprivation at this time that there is an apocryphal story concerning him, whereby it is alleged that during the exceptionally cold winter of 1946-1947, he subsisted for some five months on a mere nine shillings!

Most of Spare's final years were spent in yet another basement, this time in Wynn Road, Brixton. The area was redeveloped during the early nineteen seventies and, save for several large public houses, there are scant remains left that bear testament to Spare's world of the immediate post-World War II period. Here

Spare held court with a large collection of stray cats, followed his artistic bent in whatever media were available to him and pursued his various occult endeavours.

The end came for Spare on 15th May 1956. At 11am Miss Payne, his housekeeper and model, had to send for the doctor as Spare was complaining of severe stomach pains. By 9pm his condition had deteriorated and he has rushed to the South West London Hospital close by, where he died shortly afterwards. Spare was buried on 22nd May, alongside his father, who had died in July 1928, at Goodmayes in Essex.

IMM and MELAW
August 1987



TIME MIRRORS

“Since all phenomena (or phenomenally appearing things) which arise present no reality in themselves, they are said to be of the noumena (in other words, they are of the Voidness, regarded as the noumenal background or Source of the physical universe of the phenomena). Though not formed into anything, yet they give shape to everything. Thus it is that phenomena and noumena are ever in union, and said to be of one nature. They are, like ice and water, reflection and mirror, two aspects of a single thing.”

The Seven Books of Wisdom — Tibetan text

In the case of a mirror there is a third aspect, the subject/viewer. Mirrors reveal and conceal. Their mystery permanent, their hints at doorways, windows and thresholds out of reach of most minds. Time. Image. Idea. There can be no separation, scientifically or subjectively. The atavistic face gazes down into a crystal pool. Ice cold water. Grunts. A hand shatters the image, fear gaunt and haunting passes across, a shadowy cloud, and through all Time that moment can persist, be reclaimed.

“What is Time, but a variety of one thing?” AOS

These moments of Time accumulate, are listed under memory in our modern synapses, are posited as always retrievable, amorphous. Nothing is forgotten, all is permitted. In a stinking cave muttering babies scream and scratch, furs undulate in copulation. In one corner, bright-eyed first marks are daubed on a wall. They are marks to function, marks of place, of Time. They are marks to draw results and persist beyond one human lifetime. Instinct has arisen, snake-like, coiling itself into intuition and suggested the very power of suggestion. No-one noted down from a book this process, it grew from watching the elements, closeness to life-forces, death-forces that modern persons are divorced from. On this damp stone there is a curve, it is land, horizon, ejaculation, movement.

“Magic consists in seeing and willing

beyond the next horizon.” The Sar.

Mrs Paterson stares down. Pencilled into existence. It is her as she was when she took Austin Osman Spare at 14 years old and initiated him into the art of sexual magic and a powerful system of sorcery that she had rediscovered through communion across time with systems and techniques that grew from and most animalistic and pure union of instinct. She knew, and she taught Spare, how to travel through Time, and how to remain present in Life after bodily death. She was a medium, but her guides were not just ikons of the intuitive tribes, American indians, tantric Tibetans, aboriginals. she understood the most particular secret. Her medium was herself. She was able to travel through mirrors back in Time, and forward in Time. There is a drawing by Spare, pencil and gouache, finished in 1928. The main figure is Mrs Paterson. Coming from behind her head making a blister in the shimmering green aura, a half complete face. It belongs to no-one, everyone. It is her, literally, it is a cavalier, symbolically, it is Austin Osman Spare literally. This one picture contains all the secrets Spare never wrote down. He appears in the bottom right-hand corner, an old man, eyes closed, concentrating, materialising. What Spare does is trick us. All his writings are symbolic, they were never intended to be taken literally on any level, despite modern infatuations to the contrary. His writings are purely decorative. They are

entertainment. His relaxation AFTER his real work. His special trick was to convince everybody that his drawings, paintings, images were symbolic. They are in fact his only real work. Like all great sorcerers he hid the real secret in apparently commonplace media. In the key picture he is actually kneeling. It is a photographic image of his prediction of both his own bodily death, and his worship of Mrs Paterson as his true Goddess. His use of prostitutes and scarlet women of middle age in his sexual magick was to return to his potency with his only access point through Time into Timelessness. They were closer to Mrs Paterson, so he used them as a focussing visual image to recharge his contact with her. When she died, he took her energy and literally trapped it, living, into this, and one or two other pictures. He sinks into her chest, is absorbed, they rise together, androgynous, both their faces, all their ages superimposed. He has drawn himself dying, conjuring himself into the image in advance, so he remains always able to return.

"Art is the truth we have realised of our belief." AOS

"Art can contradict science." AOS

Do you see those flowers growing on the sides of the abyss whose beauty is so deadly and whose scent is so disturbing? Beware ..." de Guatita

In his images of sorcery, his purest incantations through Art, Spare uses a graphic skill and technique second to none. Yet his most commonly seen works are excellent, but obvious in their skill. Sometimes deliberately fast and loose. The nearest modern parallel would be Salvador Dali, who could suggest perfection in a few marks, or worship HIS goddess, Gala, with a photographically pure technique that is uncannily accurate. It seems to me that Spare is equal in genius to Rembrandt in the past, Dali in the present and Brion Gysin in the future.

"The future is in the past, but it is not wholly contained in the present." Hoene-Wronski

Both Spare and Gysin lived to reach new dimensions, they understood to pursue Wisdom, not knowledge. This alone made collaboration with most magickal groups impossible. Where the need for nostalgic elitism and power by knowledge and length

of bookshelf far too often camouflage self-aggrandisement where self-improvement to serve is the reality. Peladan was in fact a prophet of developments that later became possible, and only now become likely. Spare was aware that mystery and magick generate fascination and attraction in human persons. He used his books, his Beardsley-like graphics, his writings to attract interest after his death. He knew that this would reactivate his soul and animate his psyche once more. He was also shrewd enough to make ALL his secrets non-verbal. Not one is contained in his writings. Only the atavistic paintings, and the 'Time Mirror' drawings explain his vision.

"The Universe is a creative process carried on by man's imagination, an operative power capable of becoming more supple, more animate." Teilhard de Chardin.

What is happening in these certain key pictures is this. All ideas have an image. There are no exceptions. All materials that make a piece of art are material. They are formed of patterns of atoms and molecules, charged by various energies. Modern psychology also accepts that Ideas are material entities, like animals and plants. All mythological ideas, Jung states are ESSENTIALLY REAL, and far older than any philosophy. they originated in primal perceptions, correspondences and experiences. the catalytic element that regenerates a reaction between Entitic Ideas and spectator (viewer of painting) favours parapsychological events is the presence of an active archetype. In the case of Spare's Art this can be anything from an obvious glyph, a non-decorative aesthetic arrangement, or in the most intense works an invisible charge of energy which calls the deeper, instinctual layers of the psyche into action. The archetype is a borderline phenomenon, an acausal connecting principle closest in explanation to deliberately controlled, SELF-conscious, synchronicity. When Spare says Self-Love, he means Self-Conscious, yet egoless. When he uses the word Chaos, he is amusing himself, and leaving a key clue. Austin Osman Spare's Chaos is both a signature and a sign-post to Future Time. ChDVH (CH) = JOY = 23. AOS is simply his name, his authorship within his secret sorceries.

"Art is the instinctive application of the knowledge latent in the subconscious." A.O.S.

After Mrs Paterson died Spare was waiting



to be inside her again, fused with her energy. The key picture is the actual moment of his death, and the moment of her death overlaid. His aim in all his magic was to reunite his spirit and hers within his Art so that they might quite literally live forever. They do live. Many unprompted witnesses have seen Mrs Paterson's eyes close, open, cry, her whole head turn, a quite literally living portrait. Magic makes dreams real, makes the impossible possible, focusses the will. Throughout its history crystals, water, polished metal, mirrors have been used to oracular ends. Spare's massive achievement is that he recognised the potential of Art, of image, to be the most powerful mirror of all. A window in Time, an Interface with death. In his art he captures not just an image but a life-form and energy. What happens is this lies dormant until it comes into contact and reacts with other energies, the viewer. Primal, atavistic man knew this and invested his ideas/images with unrestricted power: when you deal with image only, as with most 20th Century Art, you don't get anything back except aesthetics. Spare has achieved the previously impossible, a two-way communication where his image reacts to and with us. It has a life of its own. The nearest parallel, a mirror in which you can see another world, another Time, another dimension, yet one you cannot reach into like water, one your hand reaching out cannot quite touch, the glass remains solid and frustrates us. What this energy held within his images is doing is transcending the barriers of Time so what we are dealing with is a four-dimensional object or image. This form of energy will have existed at all times and will exist at all times.

An objective and critical survey of the available data would establish that perceptions occur as if in part there were no space, in part no time. Space and Time are not only the most immediate certainties for us, they are also empirically, since everything observable happens as though it occurred in Space and Time. In the face of this overwhelming certainty it is understandable that reason should have the greatest difficulty in granting validity to the

peculiar nature of 'telepathic' phenomena. But anyone who does justice to the facts cannot but admit that their apparent space-timelessness is their most essential quality. The fact that we are totally unable to imagine a form of existence without Space and Time by no means proves that such an existence is in itself, impossible. And, therefore, just as we cannot *draw* from an appearance of space-timelessness, any absolute conclusion about a space-timelessness form of existence, so we are not entitled to conclude from the apparent space-time quality of our perception that there is NO FORM of existence without Space and Time. Just as physics now allows for 'limitedness of space,' a relativization, it is beginning with Catastrophe Theory to posit a 'limitedness' of both Time and Causality. In short nothing is fixed, the possibilities ALONE are endless.

"Conscious looking is a search for verification of the notions that impel the search, and always has a circular mirroring element in it." TOPY

In Spare's best images it seems a medium has been found whereby the essence that survives death but it is mostly beyond our communication has been captured by, transmitted into an object that we are familiar with i.e. a painting, and we are therefore used to trying to interpret or receive information from. Because of the familiarity of painting we don't put up barriers. We expect to try and see what the artist felt, wanted to say. If Spare said he was going to capture and demonstrate the soul after death, most



observers would switch off. There would be interference with the transmission. Because Spare seduces us by saying this is an artwork, a picture, when in fact it is a photograph or mirror of an actual reality we remain open-minded which means there is more chance that the phenomenon of actual physical changes in his picture will happen. We shall see in short, that which many of us rightly chose not to believe in, living, moving, changing images of post-death life-force, or soul essence. You see it reacting to you, it receives and transmits direct into your conscious senses, but it must also be transmitting direct into the subconscious also, just as Sigilisation does. Presumably we transmit

back to what is there so what is there will change over the years as it reacts with various observers. All these 'energies' mingle and mutate. The soul, life-force, energy call it what you will, is generally said to be visible through the mirrors of the soul, the eyes. In the 1928 key works of Mrs Paterson the eyes are neither open, nor shut, and this is true in much of Spare's works. They are neither rejecting the possibility of seeing the captured soul, nor openly inviting it. This half-shut, half-open limbo suggests responsibility lies with the viewer to choose to commune with the elemental energies portrayed. By painting himself old when he was young and young when he was old Spare mirrors Rembrandt once more and clearly directs us constantly to links backwards and forwards through time as he succeeds in presenting an image of the apparently impossible — IMMORTALITY.

"Accept nothing, assume nothing, always look further, be open-eyed as well as open-minded and don't kid yourself." old TOPY proverb.

The psyche in its deepest reaches seems well able to participate in an existence beyond the web of Space and Time, this dimension is often dubbed eternity, or infinity, yet it actually behaves, if we take Spare's art as representative [it is not symbolic], as either a one-way or two-way mirror dependent for its function upon the translation of the unconscious, into a communicable image that bonds the actual molecules of the graphic image with its driving forces, unlocked from the unconscious into a fixed or mobile source of power dependent upon previous viewers, and with, more vitally, our own abilities to interface directly with its energy. All 'matter' is formed of molecules and atoms, therefore, at least in theory, we CAN potentially walk through walls by correct vibration of our own body corresponding with the vibration of the wall. It is just as theoretically possible to lock energy into the form of an image that has the ability to move, change, alter and animate its content. The only gap of credibility being that of first-hand experience. We don't believe it until it happens to us. We only know what we have experienced, belief is rooted in recognition.

Imagination opens to syntheses larger than the sum total of reason. New images reflect more than logical synthesis can produce.

There is a radical discontinuity in every truly creative idea or discovery. Projection direct from image to viewer involves more than the logical mode of thinking that does the projecting. An idea cannot exist separate from an image. For example the Virgin Mary image embodies the idea of 'compassion'. 'A Goddess or God is a figurative image of an idea. Images are the root language of social and self control. Science attempts to explain the universe objectively, without a viewer, therefore it cannot explain Art, or the unique effects or phenomenon Spare generates by it. This is not a possible function of science, it cannot tell us why Spare's images can alter, why his faces change, eyes open and close, colours vary. Photographs are said to steal souls, they certainly capture a moment in Time. Freeze it. So do the images and oracles of Art, true Art. For Art was originally revelatory, shamanistic, fully integrated into every moment of Life. Spare's images capture the process of creation, the thoughts of the creator, and the memories of the viewer, which are recalls of past events and feelings that are more compact, briefer, than when they took place originally. Memories are Past-time brought into Present-Time. Time is not linear, all Time exists simultaneously and points in every direction simultaneously. It is quaquaversal, omnipresent. There is no reason why Spare's images should not capture Time, thought and experience, then recreate and expand it in the viewers mind. Subjective experience is no less real than objective conjecture. All roads lead to Rome in a mirror to mirror function. This function of mirroring is found in the trance state in a simple, direct way. The higher techniques of idea and artist's illusory skill makes active through Time and Space effects and phenomena normally consigned to the sceptical parking lot of modern existence.

Years of trying to rationalise inexplicable experiences adequately fall apart, and only a unique re-assessment via Spare's self-confessed image sorcery begins to give answers to what we see and feel. Time mirrors Time.

In the Mrs Paterson picture Spare depicts her at the moment of death, but as she looked when she was young. He depicts himself, then quite young, as he would look, old at the moments of death. He thus creates a situation of contradiction. She is dead, yet alive and



young, he is alive and young, yet dead. This visualisation making the image energies circular, not closed.

This is why the picture is a window, mirror, threshold active and useable by them or us. The illustration is a key to understanding the entire situation and its implications. It is a depiction of the real. Spare and Mrs Paterson live on in his art, taking the concept of Art being the Life and Soul of a culture further than ever before before dreamed. The only question remaining is, now they have cheated death, can

they, will they ever come back out?

"He who transcends Time escapes necessity." AOS

"All nature is a vast reflection of that which is within us, or else we could not know it." AOS

"Embrace reality by imagination." AOS

"What is death? A great mutation to your next self." AOS

"The life-force is not blind, we are." AOS

Genesis P-Orridge

London 1987



COLOUR PLATES

- Front Cover *Self Portrait*. Pastel, 1937 — F Letchford Collection
- 1 *Isis Smiles*. Pastel — Boleskine Collection
 - 2 *Portrait of Ann Driver*. Baffle board, pen and ink — R Walker Collection
 - 3 *Magical Stele*. Pen and ink, 1955 — Boleskine Collection
 - 4 *Self Portrait*. Oil on wood, 1911 — Private Collection
 - 5 *Night Fantasia*. Watercolour, pen and ink — R Capstick-Dale Collection
 - 6 *Self Portrait*. Pastel, 1911 — Boleskine Collection
 - 7 *Diogenes*. Pastel, 1952 — F Letchford Collection
 - 8 *Lorry Driver*. Pastel, 1952 — F Letchford Collection
 - 9 *Portrait of Joyce Carey*. Pastel, 1953 — Geraldine Beskin Collection
 - 10 *Couple*. Watercolour, pen and ink — R Capstick-Dale Collection
 - 11 *Portrait of Woman*. Watercolour, 1933 — Editions Graphiques Collection
 - 12 *Green Lady*. Watercolour, 1933 — R Capstick-Dale Collection
 - 13 *Dressing the Wounded During a Gas Attack*. Pastel — Trustees of the Imperial War Museum Collection
 - 14 *A Dispenser, Endell Street Hospital, London*. Charcoal — Trustees of the Imperial War Museum Collection
 - 15 *Masonic Profiles*. Pastel, 1954 — Geraldine Beskin Collection
 - 16 *Evil Genius*. Mixed media, c.1920 — London Borough of Southwark, South London Art Gallery Collection
 - 17 *Elemental Materialisation*. Pastel, 1955 — Boleskine Collection

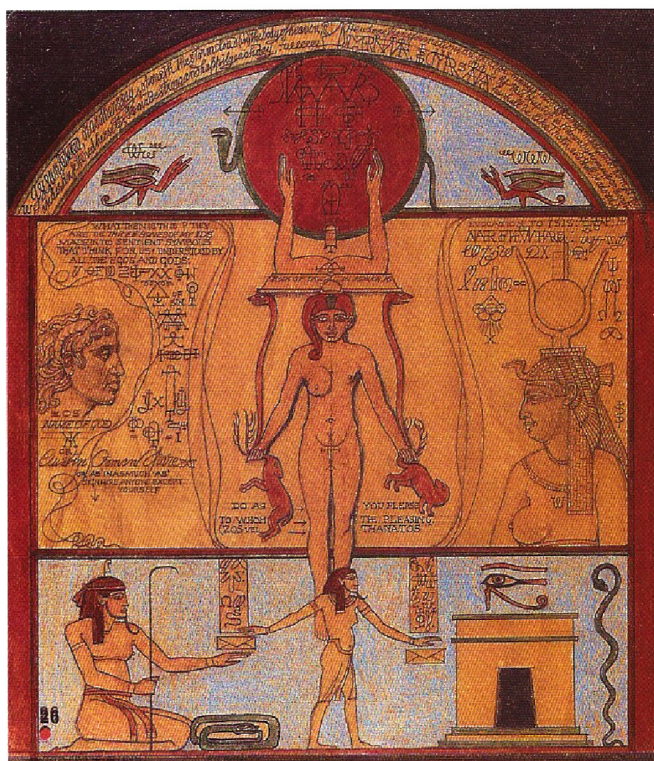
MONOCHROME PLATES

- 1 *Vampyre*. Ink, 1909 — N Silver Collection
- 2 *Untitled Figure*. Pencil — Geraldine Beskin Collection
- 3 *Factual and Fictional*. Pencil, 1949-53 — Editions Graphiques Collection
- 4 *Crowley*. Charcoal, 1931 — Boleskine Collection
- 5 *Beauty and the Beast*. Pencil and ink — Private Collection
- 6 *Untitled*. Pencil — Barry Klugerman Collection
- 7 *Untitled*. Pen and ink, 1903 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 8 *Untitled*. Pen and ink, 1904 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 9 *Burning the Grove of Satyrs*. Pastel, 1954 — Geraldine Beskin Collection
- 10 *Shadows of Light*. Pencil and pastel — Editions Graphiques Collection
- 11 *Theuray*. Pencil and ink, 1925 — London Borough of Southwark, South London Art Gallery Collection
- 12 *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of*. Pencil, 1920 — Barry Humphries Collection
- 13 *Untitled*. Pen and ink — Victor Arwas Collection
- 14 *Untitled*. Pen and ink — Victor Arwas Collection
- 15 *Orgasm*. Pencil and watercolour — R Capstick-Dale Collection
- 16 *Untitled*. Pencil and watercolour — N Silver Collection
- 17 *Pickford Waller Ex Libris*. Pen and ink, 1905 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 18 *Pickford Waller Ex Libris*. Pen and ink, 1922 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 19 *Pickford Waller Ex Libris*. Pen and ink, 1922 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 20 *The Resurrection of Zoroaster*. Pen and ink, 1904 — Victor Arwas Collection
- 21 *Self Portrait*. Pen and ink, 1909 — R Capstick-Dale Collection
- 22 *O Give Thanks Unto*. Pen and ink, 1902 — London Borough of Southwark, South London Art Gallery Collection
- 23 *Baffle-board*. 1956 — R Walker Collection
- 24 *Marquesan Mask*. Paint on wood — R Walker Collection
- 25 *Egyptian Mask*. Paint on wood — R Walker Collection

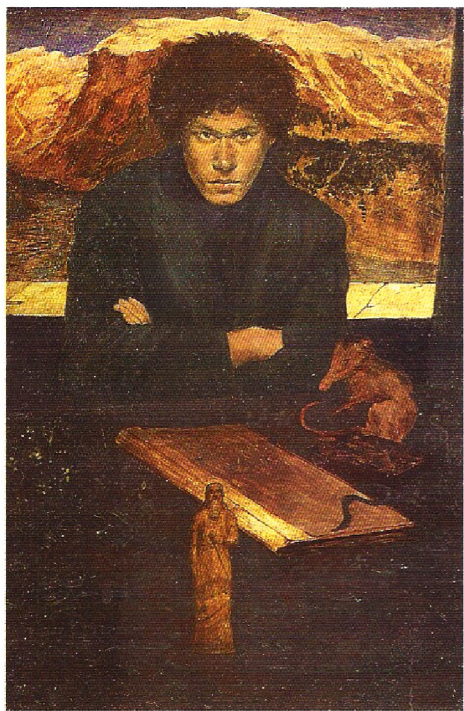




2



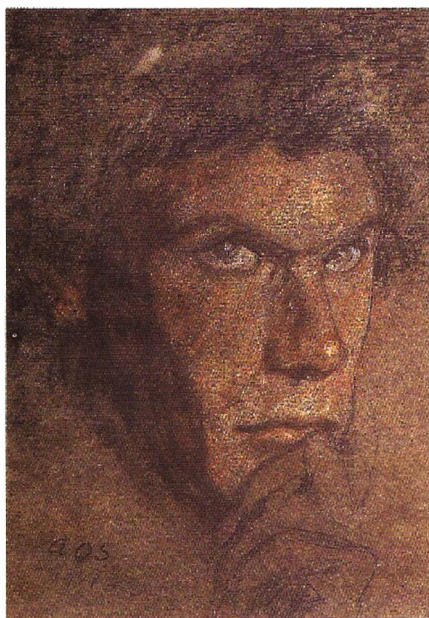
3



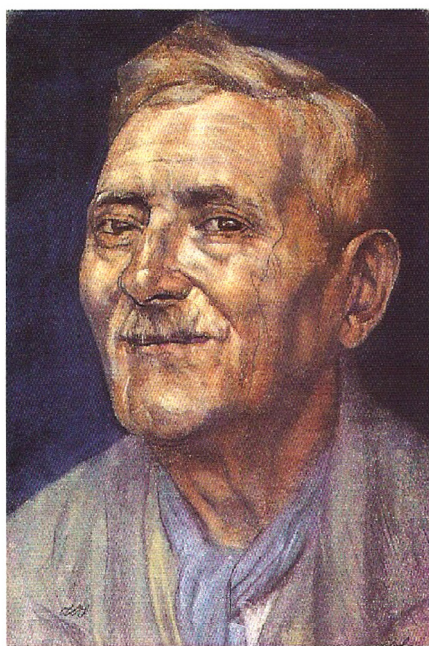
4



5



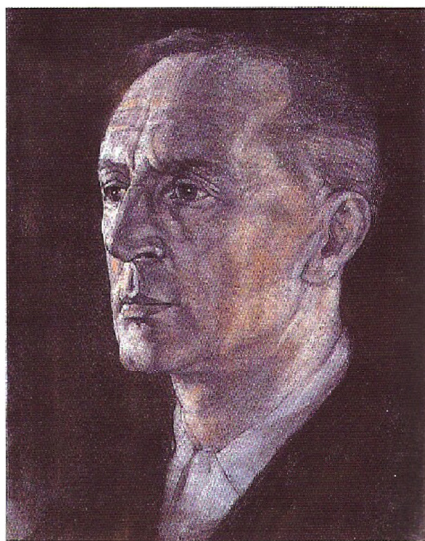
6



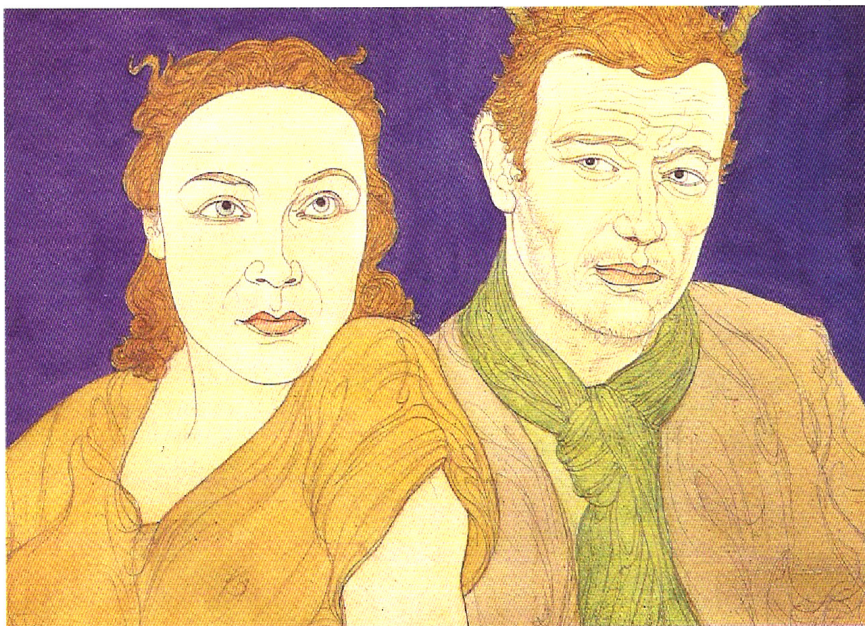
7



8



9



10



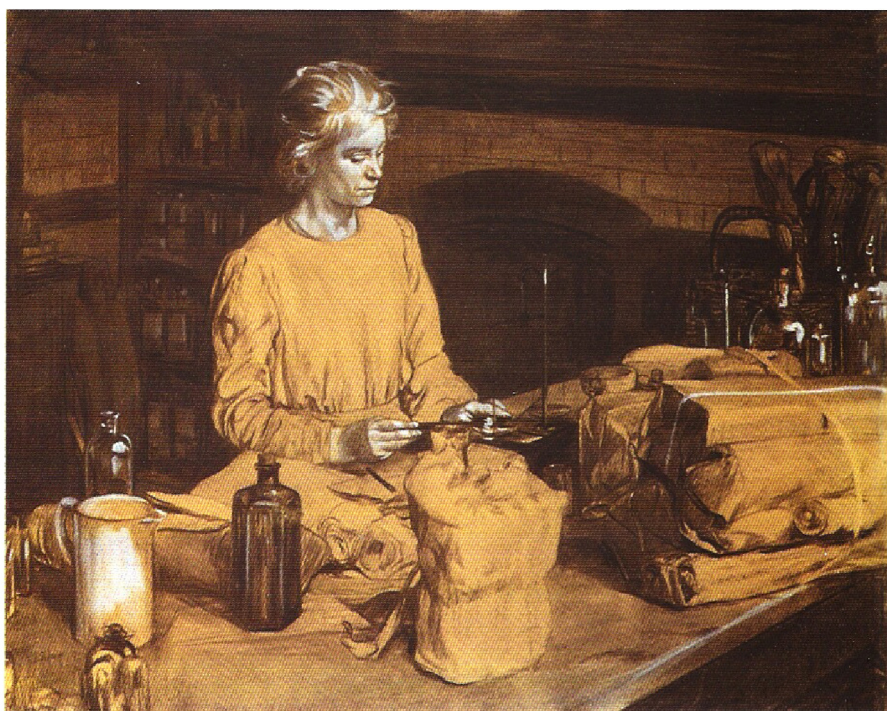
11



12



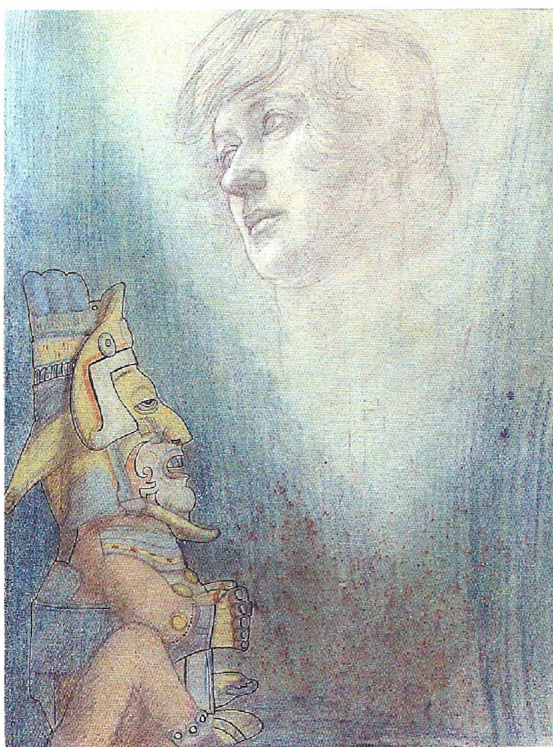
13



14

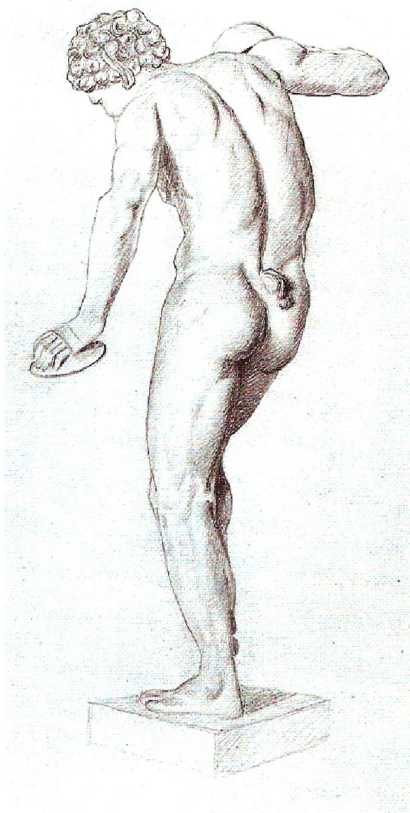
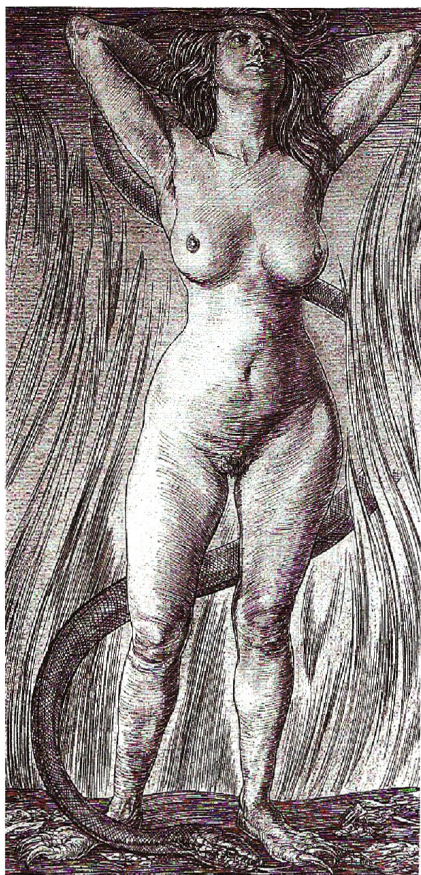


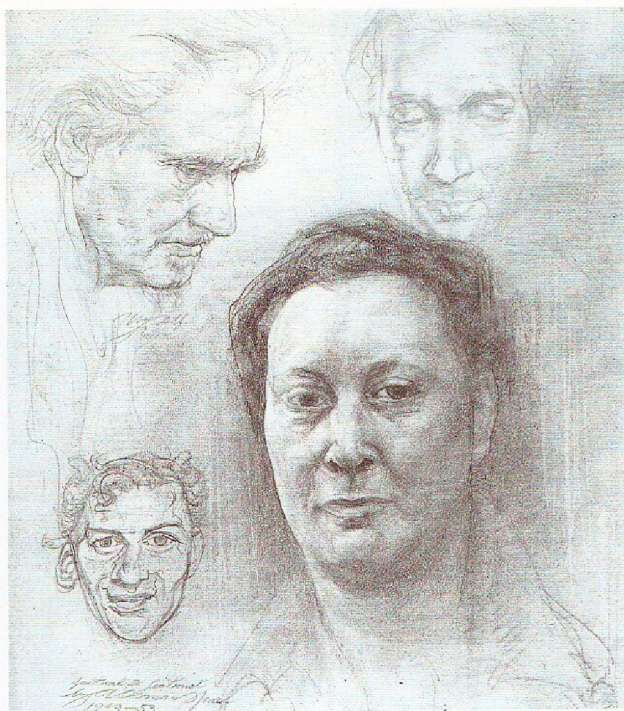
15



16







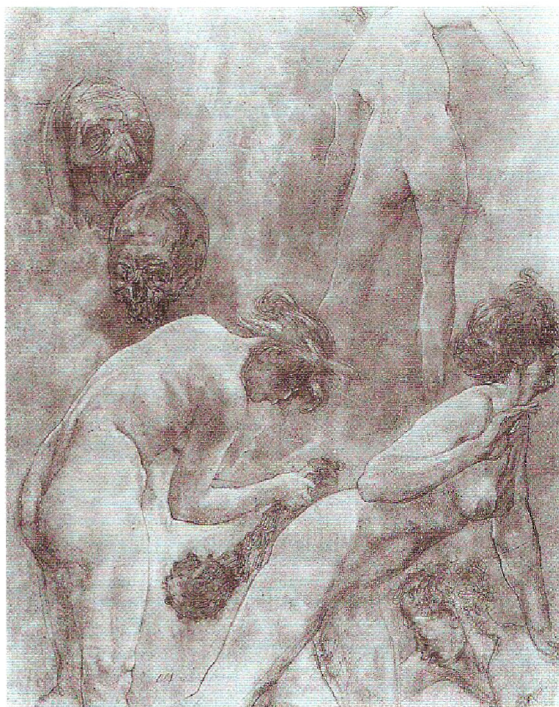
3



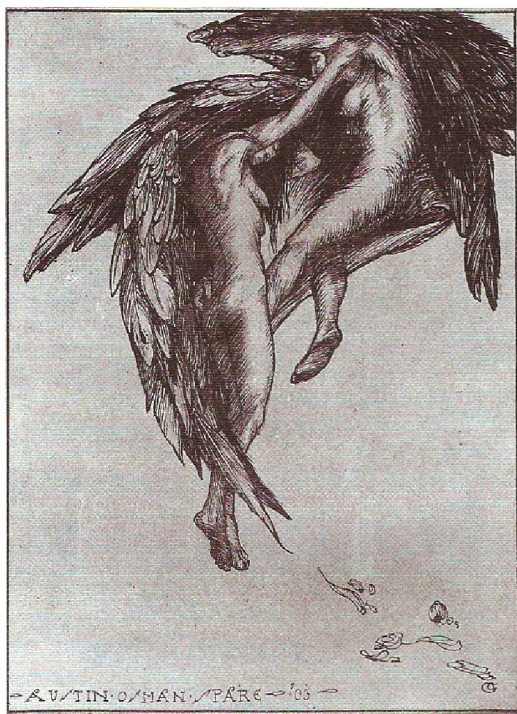
4



5



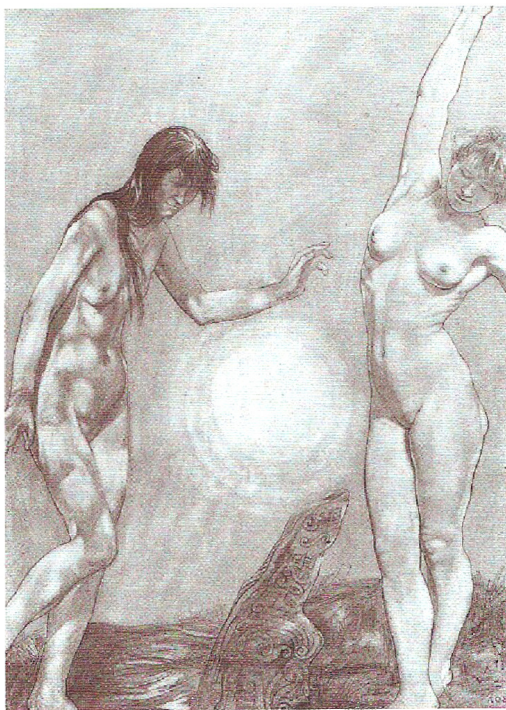
6



7

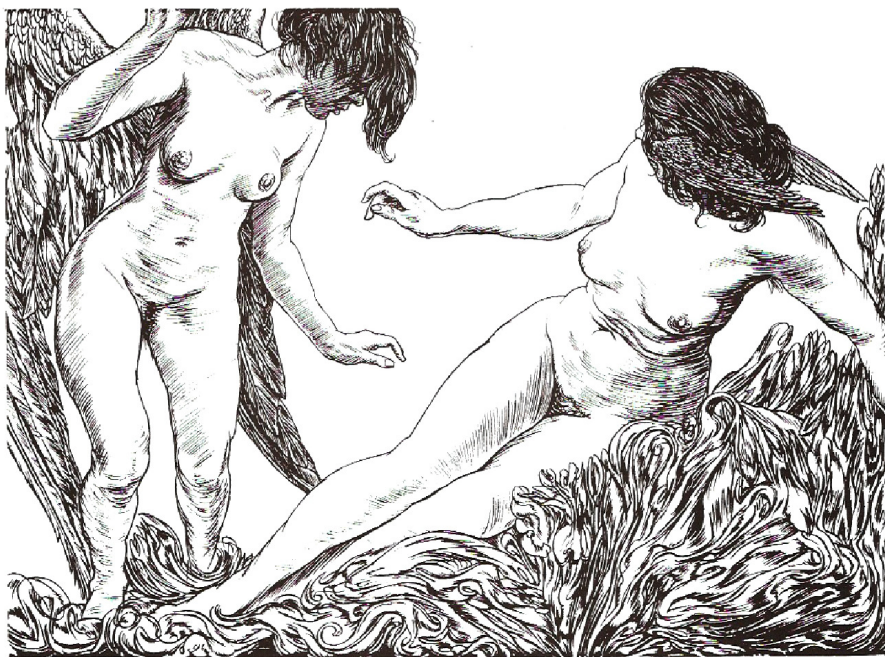


8





13



14



15





17

19



EX-LIBRIS PICKFORD-WALLER-1922

EX-LIBRIS PICKFORD-WALLER-1922



20



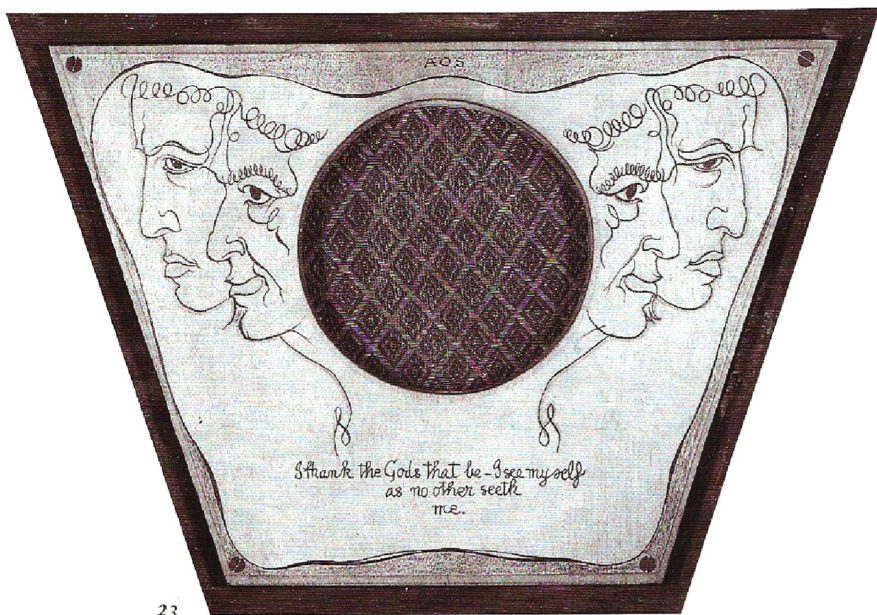
21



22



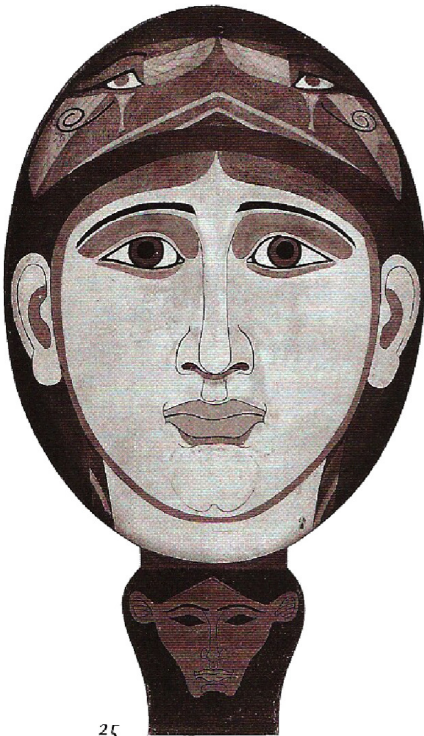
“O GIVE THANKS UNTO



23



24



25

EXPLORING SPARE'S MAGIC

The Book of Pleasure describes Spare's magical system and its philosophical basis. In it he introduces an ultimate called 'Kia' (analogous to the 'Tao', the cabalistic 'Unmanifest', or Jung's 'Pleroma') from which all manifestation stems via a process of refraction through the principle of duality: we perceive, for example, black and white because they are manifest as a polarised pair, in the Kia they exist only in potential, being undistinguished and so unmanifest. It is clear from elsewhere in his writing that Spare was acquainted with Boehme's tract *On the Supersensual Life*, where the disciple asks the master how he can come to know the supersensual life and is told "when thou canst throw thyself into THAT, where no creature dwelleth, though it be but for a moment..."

As humans we are caught up in dualities, divided against ourselves and ever seeking completion by living in desire, our universe being fragmented by our beliefs. Spare advocates a turning back to Kia and the end of all belief, denying all the dualities by his 'neither neither': think of a manifestation, eg 'white'; not white implies black; neither white nor black implies what? say grey; neither black, white nor grey implies what?...and so on until our imagination is exhausted and consciousness teeters on the brink of the void – as in the Buddhist 'not this, not that' meditation. Thus we get to know the Kia, and freedom.

To practice Spare's magic one must disentangle a conscious desire from one's web of conscious and semi-conscious beliefs, distilling the essence of that desire into a simple sigil with no conscious associations, then carrying that sigil back into the Kia by exhausting oneself and collapsing into what he describes as 'the death posture' – a total flop-out with no consciousness other than an awareness of the sigil, until that too fades. For greatest effect this should be done at a time of despair or disappointment, when some other desire has been thwarted and there is a pool of frustrated libido – 'free belief' he calls it – to fuel the operation.

Such a bare description of his magic doesn't do it great justice. It is best to read his original works together with the commentaries listed at

the end of this essay. Rather than repeat existing material, this essay suggests some further ideas for research.

In 1904 Austin Spare wrote – or rather 'created' – his first book, which was published in 1905 as *Earth Inferno*: 'created' because this book contains more images than words, and half the words in it are themselves quotation from other sources. The result is pretty incomprehensible – even with hindsight.

In the wake of *fin de siècle* decadence was this incomprehensibility just a deliberate attempt by a trendy young artist to create an aura of mystery and glamour? Reading *Earth Inferno* I have the impression of someone who has passed through despair to receive a glimpse of mystical truth, and who is now struggling to portray that realisation. It looks like a revelation which fails to communicate (to me) the essence of what the artist experienced. The fact that nine years later he is still earnestly trying to explain his discovery, and with slightly greater success, in his *Book of Pleasure* does confirm a genuine desire to teach rather than to mystify.

In that case, what is Spare trying to communicate? Nothing less than an entire philosophy of life and magic; but one so simply yet so difficult to grasp that is perhaps best approached by comparison and contrast with other better known systems. I begin with some comparisons.

The opening words of *Earth Inferno* are a

picture caption (dated 1904) which ends with a prophecy: 'Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit/And with it a resurrection of the Primitive Woman,' so Spare is announcing some sort of turning point in history. In that same year Aleister Crowley received his *Book of the Law* which announced the birth of a new age. Interestingly one element of this revelation is a celebration of the 'scarlet woman' – a female archetype unchained and reminiscent of Spare's 'primitive woman.' This element is even more clearly present in the work of Dion Fortune. In 1904 she too was writing her first book: as a young girl she was finding inspiration for her schoolgirl poetry on the coast near Weston Super Mare, an inspiration which later blossomed in the book *The Sea Priestess* set in that place and concerned with a magical operation to liberate society from the Victorian straight-jacket and announce a new female archetype – the priestly woman of power.

These coincidences suggest that Spare might have 'tuned into' what one could call, depending on one's own beliefs, a ferment of ideas, a new current of thought, the spirit of the times, or the birth of a new aeon. There is other evidence of this surge of revolutionary thinking around 1904: this was the year when Jung became drawn to Freud and his concept of the 'unconscious'; it was the year of another explorer of the unconscious – Salvador Dali; it was the time of Steiner's disenchantment with theosophy which led to the birth of 'anthroposophy.' Other works completed in 1904 to be published in 1905 include Einstein's special theory of relativity, and his paper on the photoelectric effect which won him the Nobel Prize in 1921 and which provided the first strong evidence to support the newly formulated quantum theory.

All in all 1904 was a most interesting year, and this was put most clearly by Crowley when he announced it as the year of the birth of a new aeon. So let us begin by comparing Spare's revelation with Crowley's.

Disappointingly there is no obvious comparison between Crowley's *Book of the Law* and Spare's *Earth Inferno* – one the work of a writer, the other the work of an artist. The nearest thing to the *Book of the Law* written by Spare is the first part of his later *Focus of Life*. It consists of three chapters of aphorisms dictated by three different beings – Kia, Zos and Ikkah – which first appear in *Earth Inferno*, and it therefore demands comparison with the *Book of the Law* which also consists of

three chapters dictated by three beings. As the last words from Kia are "I – infinite space" it is immediate to identify Kia with Nuit and to try to see parallels in the two texts.

The only obvious parallels are in Spare's second chapter which contains some pretty thelemic utterances, such as:

"The mighty are righteous for their morals are arbitrary";

"Judge without mercy, all this weakness is thy self abuse";

"There is only one sin – suffering";

"...be surely what thou wilt" (an interesting comparison with "do what thou wilt");

"Fear nothing – strike at the highest"... and so on.

The *Focus of Life* was, however, written after Spare had been in contact with Crowley, so these similarities may well be due to Spare knowing the *Book of the Law*; but remember that he had rejected Crowley, so any influence would not be slavish imitation but rather ideas chosen because they were in accord with his own vision.

The conclusion I am suggesting is that one way to view Spare's magic is as his own interpretation of a new current which entered the group mind around 1904. He was seeing one facet of the whole; Crowley, Einstein, Jung, Fortune and probably many others were to pick up other facets of it. Each tried to explain what they saw: some like Crowley provided very full accounts, others like Einstein provided very detailed accounts of smaller parts of the whole. Spare was trying to give a full account, an entire philosophy of existence, but did not communicate it very clearly. So we can understand his work better if we allow other people's ideas to cast light on it.

The first difference between Crowley and Spare that strikes me is that Spare's writing provides a simple, coherent theory where Crowley's provides a detailed technology. It is possible to read Spare carefully and come up with the response 'yes, but what are you supposed to DO?' – there is little practical instruction. Crowley, on the other hand, has provided an enormous corpus of ritual and other practices, more than any person could ever master in a lifetime, but there are times when one is hard put to find one coherent theory behind all these practices – he went through his Golden Dawn phase, his Buddhist phase, his Thelemic phase and so on. By way of analogy you could compare Spare's writing



to Einstein's — it may be hard to understand, but behind it lies a very simple model of reality. To obtain great energy, according to Einstein, it is only necessary to split the atom; to obtain a desire, says Spare, it is only necessary to remove it to the unconscious, organic level and consciously forget it. But in practice the simple splitting of an atom requires a vast investment in technology; similarly, most people cannot follow Spare's simple instructions unless they have previously done a lot of self development along the lines of, say, Crowley's magical technology (there may be some with innate magical sense, but most of us are still adrift on a sea of beliefs and desires). So one approach to Spare is to use his world-view to help clear one's mind of a surfeit of gods, while actually practicing thelemic techniques to strengthen one for Spare's magical methods.

I like the contrast between Crowley's "do what thou wilt" and Spare's "be what thou wilt" because it illustrates my feeling that Crowley and Spare represent, as it were, the yang and yin of the new aeon. Though Crowley recognises that existence is pure joy, his magic reflects the will to power where Spare's reflects the will to pleasure. There is much of taoism in Spare's writings. Paradoxically, however, although female forms abound in his art, 'the feminine' plays little part in his apparently misogynist writings. It is the spirit of his ideas which is so yin — as if the Feminine was working at the unconscious level in Spare whereas the Masculine was driving Crowley's unconscious.

One example of the 'yin' nature of Spare's system is his emphasis on the importance of forgetting. In his system you have a desire, you devise an apparently meaningless sigil to encapsulate that desire, you exhaust yourself in a frenzy of activity until the only object remaining in consciousness is that sigil, you hold on to it until it has become charged with 'free belief'; then you must do all you can subsequently to forget the original desire — for conscious desiring will impede the realisation of the sigil. This is the difficult bit. It is also rather puzzling because we find a big divide here in magical theory: those systems which emphasise the 'not desiring' (eg Spare, taoism, zen) and those which advocate enflaming oneself with desire — as in Crowley's instructions for devotion to a deity, or as in the 'self help' systems which demand a constant affirmation of one's objectives (I recall seeing an American lady doing Swedish drill while chanting "I MUST, I MUST, I MUST increase my

BUST"). Both these extremes have a ring of truth, how can they be reconciled? It is not enough just to split the operation in two and say one needs to enflame oneself before it, and forget after — in traditional conjurations of the Holy Guardian Angel one goes on enflaming until success happens.

One possible explanation is that the distinction may reflect the difference between introversion and extraversion. The extravert is positive to the outside world, and negative to the inner world. When the extravert attempts 'inner' work he finds it a crazy place like Alice's looking glass world — you have to metaphorically walk backwards in order to move forwards. The introvert is much more at home in his inner world, but is more likely to be perplexed by the outer world: here the introvert finds that he has so often to go backwards in order to move forward. The introvert feels desire as such a vivid tangible force — perhaps more tangible than the actual object of desire — that the desire really does serve to block and render him impotent; thus the introvert is more often driven to using paradoxical methods in the outer world. This is in keeping with Eysenck's idea of the extravert as someone who needs greater stimulation to be effective, while the introvert needs to avoid overstimulation. If an extravert wants his record in the charts he should plug it like crazy, but if the introvert wants to do the same he would do better to try to get the record banned! If the extravert wants to become successful he should hang up 'I'm the greatest' posters and constantly affirm his desire, while the introvert would do better to blow his desire on a sigil and then try so hard to fail that he eventually becomes an underground cult figure. Thus it seems that the magic of taoism and Spare is magic for introverts, while the out and out invocatory stuff is better suited to the extravert.

This is, of course, a gross oversimplification: no-one is pure extravert or introvert; we are a mixture and so need to blend our magics. But it does suggest a useful concept to experiment with, and a possible answer to the problem that magic so often fails when the operator is too personally involved: if you wish to practice magic in a situation which seems very extraverted and 'other' (like healing an unknown person at a distance), then you would do well to 'enflame yourself with prayer.' But if the matter is one which involves you very personally, then you would do better to follow Spare's approach. Or perhaps the introvert



would use Spare's magic to operate on the outside world, and Crowley's magic for inner working; while the extravert needs Crowley's magic for the outer and Spare's on the inner? In either case, of course, the long-term object is to grow out of this slavery to the concept of intro/extraversion and start living!

Another interesting point is the distinction between the magic and the man. Anyone studying Spare's magic books would expect the writer to be a sort of ascetic zen master: "simplicity I hold most precious." He advocates simplicity, ascetism: "Bed, a hard surface; clothes of camel hair; diet, sour milk and roots of the earth. All morality and love of women should be ignored." He rants against ritual magicians and all their parade and paraphernalia, but later in life he painted an altar piece for Grant's Nuit Isis Lodge and was prepared to do work for Gerald Gardner as described in Grant's *Images and Oracles*.

One answer is that many years had passed since his books were written — the man had changed. Another is that perhaps Spare was primarily just a channel for his magical ideas: someone to whom they were revealed but who never succeeded in fully realising them. Perhaps he too had difficulty if practicing what he preached, being a man ahead of his time? His final chapter of the *Book of Pleasure* contains these words: "I ... am impervious in purity (of self-love) — but I dare not claim its service! I am in eternal want of realisation ... An opinionist, I fear to advocate an argument, or compromise myself by believing my own doctrines as such ..." and so on.

The Austin Spare described by Kenneth Grant in his *Images and Oracles* sounds much more like a tribal shaman than a zen master. Some people have asked 'which is the true Spare?' Grant actually knew Spare in his later years, so it is reasonable to assume that Spare was as he describes at that time, and we hear of Spare co-operating with ritual magicians, using such elaborations as an 'earthenware virgin' for sex magic, and muttering incantations as part of his procedure — elements which play no part in the system as described in the *Book of Pleasure*.

So do we conclude that he was a changed man? That he had degenerated (or even

advanced?) from the pure system he described to a form of shamanistic sorcery? Personally I prefer to accept Grant's overall view of him as a master shaman, and believe that through his innate skills he obtained an early vision of a new system of magic, a magic for the coming age. Rather than debating as to which was the true Spare, we should therefore look to him as a prophet rather than a perfect practitioner of his own system, and we should instead concentrate on developing the technology of that system for ourselves and for future generations. Is this not basically what the new school of magic known as 'chaos magic' is all about?

If 1904 was indeed a revolutionary year, it is reasonable to ask if there are any astrological phenomena to support this. The most obvious one to strike me is the entry of Uranus (planet of upheaval) into Capricorn (sign of structures).

Once before since its discovery Uranus had entered Capricorn, in about 1820. This was the year when Oersted demonstrated the link between electricity and magnetism — a revelation which was to have a profound effect on conventional ideas of physical reality.

Although I'm not aware of any great occult crisis at that time, James Webb (in *The Flight from Reason*) did choose 1820 to mark the beginning of what he called 'the Age of the Irrational'. I suspect that the new electromagnetic theories of the time inspired the 'etheric' occult terminology of the last century, just as Einstein's theories inspire the occultists of this century to talk of 'other dimensions'. But if the entry of Uranus into Capricorn was less significant in 1820 it could mean we are looking at a minor cycle which had exaggerated impact in 1904 because of an impending Aquarian age, or the transition to Crowley's 'Aeon of Horus'?

Anyway, in late 1987 we are now at the end of the final or 'twelfth house' phase of this Uranus in Capricorn cycle, making it a very suitable time for a major exhibition and re-evaluation of Spare's work before Uranus enters Capricorn again next February.

Is the convention of the age once more reaching its limit? And will 1988 be as fruitful as 1904 was?

LIONEL SNELL, 1987

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Exhibition

*Adrian Bartlett, Morley Gallery
The Staff of Morley College
Frank Letchford
Susan Jameson
Malcolm and Bali Beskin*



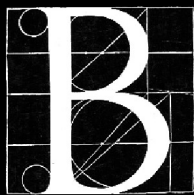
Catalogue

*Production by Flexitime Creative Services
Design by Mitchell Gumbley
Photography by Chrome
Typesetting by Type Edition
Printing by Swains, London*





BESKIN



PRESS

1- AOS — AGED 21

Photograph possibly by his brother
R. Ansell Collection

2-

SELF PORTRAIT 1909

Pen & Ink. 7" x 7"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

3

PORTRAIT OF AOS

By his sister Ellen Spare

Pen & Ink. 18" x 12"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

4-

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Pencil & Ink. 16" x 10"

Private Collection, London

5-

MAGICAL STEEL 1955

General Benedictus & Love

Of All Things

Ink on Wood. 15" x 13"

Boleskine House Collection

6-

ISIS SMILES 1954

Pastel. 24" x 18"

Boleskine House Collection

7

MAGICAL STEEL

General Anathema & Malediction

Ink on Wood. 13½" x 9½"

Boleskine House Collection

8

LIFE STUDY 1950

Pastel. 15" x 12"

Editions Graphiques Collection

9-

LIFE STUDY

Pastel. 21" x 16"

Editions Graphiques Collection

10-

SEATED NUDE 1935

Pastel. 17" x 20"

Editions Graphiques Collection

11

CH-AS IS JOY

Pastel. 23" x 15"

L. Hodgeson Collection

12-

GAS ATTACK

Pastel. 39" x 29"

Trustees of Imperial War Museum



AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE
1886-1956
THE DIVINE DRAUGHTSMAN

*An appreciation of the Man,
the Artist and the Magician.*



*Catalogue of the Exhibition held at
The Morley Gallery,
London, September 1987.*

13-

DISPENSER.

ENDELL STREET HOSPITAL.

Mixed Media. 20½" x 26½"

Trustees of Imperial War Museum

14-

ROAD NEAR FLEURBAIX

Charcoal. 24" x 48"

Boroughs Wellcome

Iconographic Collection

15

RELAY POST AT GINCLY

Pastel. 24" x 39"

Boroughs Wellcome

Iconographic Collection

16

AN AID POST

Pastel. 43" x 33"

Boroughs Wellcome

Iconographic Collection

17-

ADVANCED DRESSING STATION

Pastel. 33" x 43"

Boroughs Wellcome

Iconographic Collection

18-

BEARERS AT REST

Charcoal. 23" x 38"

Boroughs Wellcome

Iconographic Collection

19-

ORGASM

Pencil & Watercolour. 12" x 9"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

20-

CORYBANTIC ENNUI 1952

Pastel & Pencil. 17" x 21"

A. Brochie Collection

21

UNTITLED NUDES

Watercolour & Pencil. 13" x 10"

B. Humphries Collection

22-

DANCE

Pencil & Watercolour. 8" x 21"

N. Silver Collection

23-

UNTITLED FIGURES 1934

Pencil & Watercolour. 6½" x 16"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

24-

NIGHT FANTASIA

Ink & Watercolour. 15" x 11"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-35-

FEMALE NEBULA 1955

Pastel. 17" x 13"

Boleskine House Collection

-26-

BURNING OF THE GROVE OF SATYRS 1954

Pastel. 19" x 14"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-27-

UNTITLED

Pastel. 19" x 14"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-28-

IDYLL AFFLATUIS

Pastel. 14" x 19"

G-P-Orridge Collection

-29-

DEMON RISING

Pastel. 26" x 18"

Boleskine House Collection

-30-

THE IDS DU MONDE

Pastel on Wood. 17" x 25"

G-P-Orridge Collection

-31-

MASONIC PROFILES 1954

Pastel. 24" x 33"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-32-

ELEMENTAL MATERIALISATION 1955

Fearful Symmetry

Pastel. 30" x 22"

Boleskine House Collection

-33-

SELF PORTRAIT

Pencil. 15" x 12"

V. Arwas Collection

-34-

FACTUAL & FICTIONAL 1949-53

Pencil. 15" x 13"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-35-

THE STUFF THAT DREAMS

ARE MADE OF 1920

Pencil. 15" x 10"

B. Humphries Collection

-36-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING 1920

Pencil. 20" x 14"

A. Brochie Collection

-37-

EVIL GENIUS 1920

Pastel & Ink. 10" x 8"

London Borough of Southwark,

South London Art Gallery

-38-

SHADOWS OF LIGHT

Pencil & Pastel. 21" x 15"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-39-

ILLUSTRATION FROM

FOCUS OF LIFE 1921

Pencil & Chalk. 17" x 13"

L. Snell Collection

-40-

ONCE AGAIN TO EARTH

Pencil & Crayon. 17" x 13"

B. Klugerman Collection

-41-

THEURAY 1925

Pencil & Pastel. 20" x 12"

London Borough of Southwark,

South London Art Gallery

-42-

THE SEANCE TIME MIRRORS 1928

Pencil & Pastel. 20" x 14"

G-P-Orridge Collection

-43-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil & Crayon on Tracing Paper

9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 7"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-44-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil on Tracing Paper

9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-45-

EX LIBRIS ZOS

Coloured Pencil. 6" x 4"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-46-

FLAMING FORMS

Pencil & Wash. 16" x 11"

L. Snell Collection

-47-

UNTITLED DRAWING

Pencil. 14" x 9"

Private Collection, London

-48-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil. 13" x 16"

B. Humphries Collection

-49-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil on Tracing Paper.

10" x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

S. Robertson Collection

-50-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING 1947

Pencil & Wash. 12" x 9"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-51-

AUTOMATIC PROFILES

Pen & Crayon. 6" x 4"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-52-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil & Wash. 17" x 11"

B. Johnson Collection

-53-

AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Pencil. 15" x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-54-

NUT

Watercolour. 39" x 10"

J. Hesketh Collection

-55-

MALE AND FEMALE NUDE

Pen & Ink. 15" x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

V. Arwas Collection

-56-

ZOS 6" x 4"

BORO SATYR 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Pencil on Postcards

B. Johnson Collection

-57-

VAMPYRE 1909

Pen & Ink. 11" x 6"

N. Silver Collection

-58-

FEMALE NUDE

Pen & Ink. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-59-

RESURRECTION OF

ZOROASTER 1904

Pen & Ink. 7" x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

V. Arwas Collection

-60-

FEMALE NUDE

Pen & Ink. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10"

V. Arwas Collection

-61-

UNTITLED NUDES

Pen & Ink. 7" x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

V. Arwas Collection

-62-

UNTITLED 1903

Pen & Ink. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4"

V. Arwas Collection

-63-

UNTITLED 1904

Pen & Ink. 5" x 4"

V. Arwas Collection

-64-

CASTLE 1906

Pen & Ink. 7½" x 10½"

N. Burwood Collection

-65-

TORMENT OF FUTILITY 1909

Pen & Ink. 7" x 5"

V. Arwas Collection

-66-

14 REPRODUCTION AUTOMATIC
DRAWINGS

Including Frontispiece & Finis

Printed on hand-made English paper.

Each 17" x 12"

AOS Committee

-67-

WAIWORTH SATYR 1936

Pen & Ink. 5" x 3"

T. Light Collection

-68-

O GIVE THANKS UNTO 1902

Pen & Ink. 8" x 6"

London Borough of Southwark,
South London Art Gallery

-69-

EGYPTIAN MASK

Painted Wood

Height inc. stand 16"

R. Walker Collection

-70-

MARQUESAN MASK

Painted Wood

Height inc. stand 14"

R. Walker Collection

-71-

FORM MAGAZINE

Vol. I No.1 April 1916

S. Boden Collection

-72-

BOOK OF SATYRS 1906

London Borough of Southwark,
South London Art Gallery

-73-

PORTRAIT OF ANN DRIVER

Baffle Board, Ink on Wood.

11" x 11"

R. Walker Collection

-74-

SELF PORTRAIT 1909

Oil on Wood. 10" x 7"

Private Collection, London

-75-

SELF PORTRAIT

Pencil & Pastel. 15" x 9"

London Borough of Southwark,
South London Art Gallery

-76-

SERVAL CAT

Painted Ceramic. 6" Diameter

P. Maitney Collection

-77-

I THANK THE GODS 1956

Baffle Board, Ink on Wood.

11" x 15"

R. Walker Collection

-78-

PRAYER

Ink & Watercolour. 5" x 11"

A. Mitchell Collection

-79-

MOONBEAM 1947

Pastel on Wood. 13" x 10"

A. Brothie Collection

-80-

CROWLEY 1931

Charcoal. 18" x 12"

Boleskine House Collection

-81-

SELF PORTRAIT 1911

Pastel. 13½" x 9½"

Boleskine House Collection

-82-

SIDEREAL SEMBLANCE 1955

Pastel. 21" x 13½"

A. Brothie Collection

-83-

SELF PORTRAIT 1937

Pastel. 15½" x 12½"

F. Letchford Collection

-84-

SIDEREAL STUDY 1955

Pastel. 14" x 10"

Private Collection

-85-

MOULINS

Pastel. 16" x 13"

Occultique Collection

-86-

PORTRAIT OF JOYCE CAREY 1953

Pastel. 15" x 12"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-87-

GREEN LADY 1933

Watercolour. 10" x 7"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-88-

COUPLE 1946

Pencil & Watercolour. 10" x 8"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-89-

SUBTLENESS 1947

Pencil on Stained Wood.

13½" x 16"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-90-

MISS ALEXIS SMITH 1943

Watercolour. 8" x 6½"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-91-

FEMALE PORTRAIT 1930

Watercolour. 12" x 9½"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-92-

MALE PORTRAIT 1946

Watercolour & Pencil.

10" x 7½"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-93-

FEMALE PORTRAIT

Watercolour & Pencil. 14" x 10½"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-94-

ANDREW J. DAVIS 1947

Watercolour. 10½" x 8"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-95-

FEMALE PORTRAIT, MOULINS

Watercolour. 14" x 10"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-96-

FEMALE PORTRAIT 1947

Pencil & Watercolour. 11½" x 8½"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-97-

MASK

Pencil & Stained Wood. 15" x 13"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-98-

MASK 1932

Pencil & Watercolour. 8½" x 7½"

Private Collection

-99-

SIDEREAL FEMALE PORTRAIT 1947

Pencil on Stained Wood.

16" x 14"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-100-

GRIFTER 1951

Pastel. 12" x 10"

F. Letchford Collection

-101-

EX DOCKER 1952

Pastel. 14" x 10"

F. Letchford Collection

-102-

DIOGENES

Pastel. 18" x 12"

F. Letchford Collection

-103-

COUPLE

Watercolour. 8½" x 12"

R. Capstick-Dale Collection

-104-

FLOWER SELLER

Pastel. 15" x 12"

F. Letchford Collection

-105-

OLD SOLDIER 1952

Pastel. 18" x 12"

F. Letchford Collection

-106-

OLD TIMER 1952

Pastel. 12" x 10"

F. Letchford Collection

-107-

LORRY DRIVER 1952

Pastel. 15" x 11"

F. Letchford Collection

-108-

UNTITLED FIGURE

Pencil 13" x 9"

Geraldine Beskin Collection

-109-

SATYRIZATION OF CLARK GABLE

1950-53

Pencil & Watercolour.

12½" x 11"

B. Humphries Collection

-110-

ELDERLY HOBO, SIDERIAL

STUDY 1953

Pastel on Wood. 19" x 12"

F. Letchford Collection

-111-

SKULL

Mixed Media. 7" x 8½"

J. Burch Collection

-112-

ANIMALS STUDY 1912

Pen & Ink. 21½" x 14"

V. Arwas Collection

-113-

UNTITLED

Pencil & Watercolour.

3" x 12½"

Editions Graphiques Collection

-114-

EX LIBRIS PICKFORD WALLER

1905 8" x 5" 1922 7" x 4"

1922 8" x 5"

Ink & Wash.

V. Arwas Collection

-115-

UNTITLED ILLUSTRATION

Ink. 15" x 10"

Boleskine House Collection

-116-

UNTITLED ILLUSTRATION

Pen. 11" x 14"

L. Snell Collection

-117-

UNTITLED ILLUSTRATION 1905

Ink. 9" x 7"

V. Arwas Collection

-118-

THE TERRACE BY SHENLY ROAD

c.1920

Watercolour. 10" x 13"

London Borough of Southwark,

South London Art Gallery

-119-

PENCIL STUDY 1910

22" x 15"

V. Arwas Collection

-120-

COLLECTION OF POSTCARDS AND

SKETCHES

Occultique Collection

-121-

ZOS VEL THANTOS

Pencil. 4" x 6"

S. Boden Collection

-122-

JENOLAN CAVES

Pen & Ink & Watercolour.

3½" x 5½"

S. Boden Collection

-123-

JENOLAN CAVES

Pen & Ink & Watercolour.

3½" x 5½"

S. Boden Collection

-124-

JENOLAN CAVES

Pen & Ink & Watercolour.

11" x 9"

S. Boden Collection

-125-

LANDSCAPE WITH INDIAN

FIGURE 1955-6

Pastel on Wood

12" x 23"

Private Collection

